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Mr. Leung, there have been some questions about Hong Kong today, so you can talk about both, I suppose; Thierry answered part of the question raised by several people in the earlier session, so you can say a word about globalization if you like, or you can talk about Hong Kong. You are, perhaps, the one most qualified to address the issue of Hong Kong today.

Chun-ying LEUNG

I had prepared something to address the theme of this session, which is the Chinese position on globalization, I am throwing this away now, because I heard Thierry, in his opening remarks, mention Hong Kong a couple of times, as did Eric just now.

We have had four months of non-stop troubles in Hong Kong, and it is going on. As far as the violence is concerned, it is trending-down; the number of rioters and peaceful demonstrators have been going down together. In this trending-down motion, we might, if we are not careful or lucky, see some spikes in the degree of violence or the scale of casualties. The police and other authorities in Hong Kong have exercised maximum restraint, and that is why I listen to you, and that is why we are not seeing the kind of casualties in the streets of Hong Kong as we have seen in other parts of the world.

Democracy. Hong Kong is not a sovereign state, Hong Kong is part of China, so when we look at democracy or the process of democratization in Hong Kong, we should not compare Hong Kong with a sovereign state. We should, and could, only compare democracy and democratization in Hong Kong to that in cities: Paris, London, New York, Tokyo, or Washington DC. However, Hong Kong is not an ordinary city because under the Basic Law, which was promulgated in 1990 after five years of intensive and large-scale consultation in Hong Kong and in the rest of the country, and under the terms of Hong Kong's return to China, Hong Kong was given, not just 'One country, two systems', it was given 'One country, two systems, Hong Kong people ruling Hong Kong, with a high degree of autonomy'. Not complete autonomy, but a high degree of autonomy, and this high degree of autonomy is well-defined in the Basic Law. Altogether, there are 160 articles in the Basic Law, all in black and white, which have been practiced for 22 years now, so when we talk about 'One country, two systems' or when we talk about democracy, these are no longer abstract concepts for Hong Kong, they are part of our constitutional and legal arrangements.

China, if I have to make a guess, could straightaway say to the people of Hong Kong that 'You can have your own way of electing your Chief Executive, the head of the Hong Kong government, if the result of the election is to produce a Chief Executive who has the same degree of autonomy and the same scale of authority as the Mayors of London, Washington DC, Tokyo, New York and Paris'. However, speaking as a former Chief Executive, I can tell you, and you can look at Basic Law, which is available in both English and Chinese on the website, the Chief Executive of Hong Kong is given a much higher degree of authority, and through exercise of this high degree of authority Hong Kong attains its high degree of autonomy. Local democratic processes do not produce Mayors, or Chief Executives in the case of Hong Kong, who have this high degree of authority, and local cities do not have this high degree of autonomy. Where does this additional authority come from? This additional authority comes from a top-down process, so it is not entirely bottom-up, meaning the delegation of authority by the electorate to this elected person. In addition to this process, that we have in Hong Kong, the central authorities in Beijing, through the appointment of the Chief Executive, devolves certain power, that normally belongs to central governments, to the Chief Executive and therefore Hong Kong as a whole.



Therefore, in our electoral system, which, again, is in the Basic Law, we have, so far, Election Committee elections. The Election Committee consists of 1,200 drawn from different sectors of the Hong Kong community, and at the end of the election process, the person must be appointed by the central government, and this appointment is neither ceremonial nor nominal; there is a real authority to appoint, meaning the central government, in law, can appoint or not appoint the elected candidate. That is democracy in Hong Kong. The Basic Law also says that universal suffrage election is the ultimate goal in the democratic development of Hong Kong, but a universally elected Chief Executive candidate still must be appointed by the central government. To change from the present system of election by the Election Committee to universal suffrage election, which is Annex 1 to the Basic Law – again you can look at that, the approval of the National People’s Congress Standing Committee of the country, not of Hong Kong but of the country, in Beijing, is required. These are the constitutional and legal arrangements. As I said, if the Chief Executive in a democratic society, representing the people of Hong Kong as, if you like, the mayor of Hong Kong, has only that kind of power, Beijing would have said to universal suffrage straightaway. I could look at the flip side of the question: would cities in other democratic countries, including those in the West, have this kind of high degree of autonomy just through the election of the local mayor, by the local electorate, without the central government or the federal government having any power or any say in the process? These are the manifestations of the principle of ‘One country, two systems’ that have already been enshrined in the Basic Law, which is a legal document.

The five demands of the protestors and rioters in Hong Kong include universal suffrage in Hong Kong, and, to them, universal suffrage is not universal suffrage according to the Basic Law; they want Hong Kong to do it by themselves, without the involvement of Beijing, so we are stuck. When I was Chief Executive, we went through a process, the so-called Constitutional Reform Process in 2014 that led to Occupy Central; in the end the whole movement died out. Beijing actually offered the opportunity of the election of the Chief Executive by universal suffrage, but some of the young students in certain quarters of the Hong Kong community would not have it because they did not like what is written in the Basic Law, and they wanted open nomination of the Chief Executive candidates.

It is a complex, complicated, and technical issue, but I thought I should seize this opportunity, and I am sure you have your concerns about the future of Hong Kong, we do too, but we have to go by the Basic Law; Hong Kong is a law-based, rule-based society, we have to go through the rule of law, again, ‘One country, two systems, high degree of autonomy, Hong Kong people ruling Hong Kong’; democracy in Hong Kong is no longer an abstract notion, it is all in the constitutional arrangements.

Thank you.